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ED 010 938 FL 000 130

EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES--THE NDEA EXPERIENCE.

BY- LEGTERS, LYMAN H.

PUB DATE OCT 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.48 12P.

DESCRIPTORS- *AREA STUDIES, *COLLEGE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS, *LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, *MODERN LANGUAGES, *FEDERAL PROGRAMS, GERMAN, GRADUATE STUDY, HUNGARIAN, SLAVIC LANGUAGES, RUSSIAN, UNDERGRADUATE STUDY, NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT (NDEA)

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LANGUAGE AND AREA CENTERS PROGRAM UNDER TITLE VI, NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT, CLARIFIES CURRENT NATIONAL EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY WORK IN EASTERN EUROPE APART FROM RUSSIA. OVERSHADOWED FOR MANY YEARS BY RUSSIA, THE REMAINDER OF THE REGION IS COMING INTO ITS OWN AS A SUBJECT OF STUDY. THE LANGUAGES ARE INCREASINGLY AVAILABLE IN THE REGULAR CURRICULUM, DESPITE MODEST ENROLLMENTS, AND THE OTHER DISCIPLINES HAVE SHIFTED TO MORE COMPLETE COVERAGE OF THE REGION. FEDERAL SUPPORT HAS BEEN PROVIDED UNDER NDEA IN TWO COMPLEMENTARY WAYS--EXISTING PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN ASSISTED TO EXPAND BEYOND RUSSIAN AND COVER ALL OF EASTERN EUROPE, AND NEW PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED WITH A NONRUSSIAN FOCUS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE. CONTINUATION OF SUCH SUPPORT IS NEEDED TO ASSURE THAT THIS RELATIVELY NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL REACH FRUITION AND OVERCOME YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT OF EASTERN EUROPE. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES NEWSLETTER," VOLUME 17, NUMBER 6, OCTOBER 1966. (AUTHOR)

ED010938

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ACADEMIES

NEWSLETTER

VOL. XVII OCTOBER 1966 NUMBER SIX

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345 EAST 46TH STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

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EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES: THE NDEA EXPERIENCE

LYMAN H. LEGTERS

In June 1966 the ACLS entered into a contract with the U. S. Office of Education to supervise the conduct of a survey of the needs of East-Central and Southeast European studies. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the present status and to make recommendations concerning the future development of language instruction and East European area studies at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels, and to suggest the role which colleges, universities, private foundations, and government agencies can take in this endeavor. An integral part of the project will be surveys of the state of the art in fourteen disciplines as well as preparation of a bibliographic and reference guide for study, development of library resources, and research on Eastern Europe. The countries concerned include: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Modern Greece, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. Thus a large number of specialists, probably in excess of one hundred, will be employed, and it is anticipated that from eighteen to thirty-six months will be required to complete the several parts of the project.

The survey is being conducted under the general supervision of the Subcommittee on East-Central and Southeast European Studies of the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies. The Director of the project is Charles Jelavich, Chairman of the Subcommittee and Professor of History, Indiana University. Chief Editor of the bibliographic project is Paul L. Horecky, Assistant Chief and East European specialist of the Slavic and Central European Division of the Library of Congress. The Director of the Language Survey is Howard I. Aronson, Associate Professor of Slavic Linguistics, University of Chicago. The Director of the Undergraduate Survey is Lyman H. Legters, whose article on East European studies appears below. Dr. Legters was formerly Chief of the Language and Area Centers program, U. S. Office of Education, and is now Research Professor, Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies, The George Washington University.

It has been apparent for some years to all those concerned with the development of foreign area studies, including of course administrators of the NDEA Language and Area Centers program, that certain sub-areas are still seriously neglected. This is usually explained by the overwhelming importance of one country, such as Russia or India. But the explanation does not lessen the importance of neglected sub-areas. And since we can now see a significant growth of interest in the non-Russian lands of Eastern Europe, it is appropriate to review some of the problems and experiences of the National Defense Education Act programs in providing support for an organic growth of language and area studies in this geographic area.

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First, however, it is necessary to clarify some of the conceptual aspects of the phenomenon—foreign area or non-Western studies—that has revolutionized parts of American higher education since World War II. Various world regions have gradually won general academic acceptance as workable focal points for specialized instructional programs. We have evolved a fairly universal understanding of what an East Asian or Middle Eastern program ought to cover, of what is requisite to an adequate set of South Asian or African offerings. But it is important to stress the notion of focus instead of thinking of a set of boundaries. It is fortunately no longer fashionable to engage in interminable discussion of where to draw the boundaries of regional studies programs—or whether, for example, the Sudan is African or Middle Eastern. For we have graduated to the realization that instructional programs do not necessarily follow putative cultural frontiers. Instead they find their coherence in a pragmatic consideration of available faculty competence. Expansion is invariably governed by a compromise between that which is desirable in terms of organic enlargement of purview and that which is obtainable in the way of new faculty skills. Programs bearing the same area designation thus vary widely in both scope and emphasis; and they may change significantly from year to year with the continued migration of faculty. The elements of continuity, aside from faculty members who do not wish to migrate, are the graduate students moving gradually toward the Ph.D. and, above all, the accumulation of library strength on the area in question.

A closely related observation is the fact that the scope, or even the strength, of a given program does not determine the use that can be made of it. There is no single pattern of area specialization, no universal model of the area specialist, apart from the established requirements of the participating academic disciplines. An area program is a perpetual struggle to enlist the best contribution of each constituent discipline and then to provide opportunity for communication and interaction among them. The disciplines differ of course in their requirements as to scholarly competence; a political scientist can get by with much cruder language skill than can the literary scholar, but he needs to understand contemporary society better than does the archaeologist. Furthermore—and this is the crux of the matter—the student may partake of an area program's offerings in quite diverse ways: he may view an introduction to Chinese civilization as a desirable part of a liberal education; he may set about to learn Russian for anticipated needs in a field of natural science; or he may seek the fullest possible acquaintance with Indian or Brazilian subject matter that is consonant with a Ph.D. in history. It has not always been fully understood, incidentally, that NDEA support for language and area programs has been intended to serve just such a variety of needs in our highly pluralistic educational system.

These are all rather rudimentary observations, but they appear to be pertinent as long as we encounter schematic mythologies about the character of foreign area studies. An area program maintains its claim to independent status not as an alternative but as a supplementary way of carving

up knowledge. It affords a supplementary mode of a communication among scholars and students, and they, by conversing or quarreling across disciplinary lines, help to offset the departmental parochialism that made such programs necessary in the first place. In this sense, area programs are probably permanent features of our academic landscape—and neither the government nor the foundations will be acting responsibly if they abandon the support of the programs, or at least selected features of them, just when they are reaching fruition as productive academic resources.

Turning now to Eastern European studies as a special field meriting more concentrated attention, it may be possible to distinguish the real problems that have hindered development from the mythical problems that many still think they see in area programs generally. Like any other regional field, Eastern Europe has its peculiarities as far as research and instruction are concerned. Some of these may be traced to academic tradition, others to the impact of public policy, and still others to the intrinsic features of the subject area.

Reference has already been made to the manner in which Russian or Soviet studies have overshadowed our academic concern with the other Slavic countries plus Hungary and East Germany. The imbalance is not difficult to explain historically. Universities, foundations, and the government were all caught up during the 1940's and 1950's in the task of developing research and instructional programs that would help us to reach a better understanding of our principal cold war adversary. Lacking a firm tradition of scholarly attention to the rest of Eastern Europe, we were easily beguiled by a dubious assumption of contemporary public policy that the "satellites" were sufficiently understood if we followed Soviet policy closely. In the postwar years we did manage to modify our infatuation with the Soviet Union to the extent of developing a formidable array of talent in the fields of modern Russian history and literature. But the scholar concerned with comparable aspects of other Eastern European societies remained a lonely figure.

Soviet studies rode the crest of the first major developmental wave in foreign area fields and were well-established before we even began to concentrate on, say, Africa. Yet the Russian field has continued to claim most of the support available to the entire Slavic and/or Eastern European field. As late as 1958-59, by which time instruction in the Russian language was readily available, there was hardly any question but that it should be designated as critical and included in the first priority listing (along with Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Hindi-Urdu, and Arabic) for support under Title VI of NDEA. The other Slavic languages, as well as Hungarian, and the other languages spoken in the Soviet Union, were all eligible for support, but none had first priority rank. And Russian studies have continued to enjoy by far the bulk of the roughly 25% of Title VI funds that have gone to the Slavic and Eastern European field. The Balkans and East Central Europe are not the only sub-areas so neglected—South Asia has been mentioned as a region in which one country tends to predominate, and it

is often observed that Korea and French-speaking Africa are neglected in their respective regions. But nowhere, I think, have intrinsic features of a region combined with public policy factors to produce such glaring neglect of a whole belt of countries of major significance.

Recognizing that these countries are important, that we have both academic and policy reasons to study them more closely, we must then consider what instructional arrangements will best meet the need. Since an integrated instructional program is more than the sum of its course offerings, this is not merely a matter of listing all relevant courses on a separate page of the university catalog and then waiting for the students to show up. Nor is it necessarily just a matter of enlarging the scope of an existing Russian program. For the systematic study of East Central Europe and the Balkans poses some special problems and imposes some distinctive requirements.

In the first place, the language problem is much knottier than it is in the Russian field—where every student knows immediately what his first language-learning task is. The student of Russian history or society knows also that he can function as a scholar if he learns no other language, however desirable it may be to have access to scholarly literature in other languages. The student of Eastern Europe knows, or will soon discover, on the other hand, that one language will not take him very far. Even if he knows at the outset that he wants to concentrate on Poland, for example, he will need German and French along with Polish, as a minimum; and if he is concerned with modern Polish history, for example, he will also want Russian. For specialization on, say, the Balkans, several indigenous languages would be needed, and Ottoman and Russian as well. And anyone wishing to open up the whole range of Eastern European studies for himself—in keeping with the kinds of course offerings that are foreseeable in most institutions, if not necessarily in terms of research—faces an almost impossible task with the six to ten regional languages of significance. There can be no question, in Eastern European as in African or Southeast Asian studies, of establishing requirements that fit the complexity of the indigenous language situation. Few institutions can even consider offering such a range of languages, even at the introductory level much less in a sequence that would assure functional competence. At the moment I think there may be five or six universities in the country where a student could be assured of access to all the language instruction he might need for any phase of Eastern European specialization. An objective of NDEA support has been to make sure that all of the important languages are offered, preferably in several different academic locales, and that instructional capacity is available in all of the indigenous languages somewhere in the country. This was a realistic goal and has been achieved. But we are still several steps removed from the more remote target of having a goodly number of viable programs across the country in which Eastern Europe is covered in adequate scope and in its own terms. This aim has been achieved for most world regions of comparable importance, but it is not yet clear how we can accord Eastern Europe a position of parity.

The particularism of the language situation is reflected in most of the other problems peculiar to the study of Eastern Europe. Since most specialists will never be fully competent to cope with the entire region, they will usually not be able to address themselves to such large and compelling topics as their counterparts do in, for example, Russian or Chinese studies. This is especially true with reference to the major issues of international affairs and the topics for which research support is most generously available. By the same token, it is at least unlikely that such relatively narrow fields as Rumanian history or Czech language will ever enjoy the substantial enrollments which make comparable Russian or Indian or Islamic coursework self-supporting or nearly so. Like individual course offerings, the prospect of a specialization in the field is never likely to prove so appealing as a specialization that confronts more directly and predictably the critical issues of world politics in our time or the large-scale scholarly questions concerning development of societies and cultures.

Yet as readily as these pessimistic remarks may be accepted today, it is well to add that most of us did not foresee ten years ago the influential role that "satellites" might play in the Soviet bloc. Even now we have not broken free of inherited notions about power politics to understand the special role that relatively small nations are able to play on a global political scale. Wisdom would seem to suggest that, instead of assuming the indefinite prolongation of current academic and national priorities, we prepare ourselves, as we have failed to do several times in the past, for new eventualities. With reference to Eastern Europe, the least that this can imply is a serious effort to develop instructional and research capacities equal to the already foreseeable challenges (by which I understand intellectual and academic as much as political challenges) emanating from Eastern Europe.

We have thus far tried two different approaches. In the case of Title VI, NDEA, all experimentation had to wait upon the availability of new resources. But as soon as new funds became available, the major Russian and East European programs were encouraged to give greater weight to the languages and related subject matter of the non-Russian sphere—without, of course, reducing the emphasis on Russia. And in two instances, where institutional priorities made this feasible, entirely new NDEA Centers were established with a focus directly on all or part of Eastern Europe (minus Russia). The latter step in particular reflected an increased flexibility of concept whereby new categories and new combinations could be entertained—a willingness that had meaning of course only when funds could be applied to its implementation. In this, as in all other program developments under NDEA, it goes almost without saying that the inclinations of institutions and scholars must converge with the possibilities and requirements of the law. This manner of partnership between government and the academic world, inherent in Title VI of NDEA, undergirds the impetus that has thus far been given to Eastern European studies.

In the case of the older NDEA center programs, there were a number of compelling reasons for stressing expansion in non-Russian fields. Despite

the danger that such subject matter might suffer from a prevailing Russian emphasis, these older center programs had the advantages of a pool of faculty competence and a gathering of committed students. And they were usually the places with considerable library resources, not only in Russian but also in Eastern European materials. Under these circumstances it was comparatively easy to add instruction in one or two additional languages and to attract faculty capable of expanding coursework on the other Slavic countries plus Hungary and East Germany. Not the least of the operative considerations was the thought that the less popular Eastern European subject matter might be maintained through initial fluctuations of interest by the well-established Russian offerings. The result, as of this writing, is that of the twelve older programs offering Russian and related subject matter, eight have developed significant strength in the Eastern European field, with perhaps four of these representing very substantial commitment to that area. In addition, two centers concentrate on Uralic and/or Altaic languages and subject matter.

Academic year 1965-66 saw eight new Slavic and/or Eastern European programs in operation with NDEA support. Six of these were undergraduate programs, two of which had some offerings other than Russian and one of which was exclusively East Central European. Of the two new graduate programs, one was mainly Russian but with some attention to the rest of the area, and one was exclusively Balkan in emphasis. The latter would unquestionably fall among the major efforts currently underway to give Eastern European studies an appropriate place in our instructional programs.

The two new programs focused entirely on Eastern Europe merit additional mention here because of the prospect that they may foreclose any temptation to view the region too largely as an offshoot of Russia (in which sense the earlier references to a 'sub-area' become inappropriate). The Balkan program at the University of Chicago resulted from the fact that Russian studies had achieved rather full development without major NDEA support; newly available resources could therefore best be applied to a new sphere of acknowledged need. The scholarly competence gathered there permitted the filling of significant gaps in the national coverage of languages and related studies under NDEA aegis. And, as in a few of the older centers, Chicago affords the possibility of fruitful collaboration at appropriate points between Balkan and Middle Eastern studies.

The other new program devoted entirely to East Central Europe raises a set of questions that I have not mentioned before. The Portland State undergraduate center, closely connected with an instructional and research emphasis on German-speaking areas, is thus experimental in the best sense of the word. Although Russian is also offered at Portland State College, this is a deliberate effort to view Eastern Europe in relation to its historical and contemporary ties with western rather than eastern neighbors. The major questions, however, have to do with the rightful place, if any, of this field in undergraduate curricula. Premature specialization at the expense

of the larger purview of liberal education is the natural fear; the counterbalancing hope is that students will begin their language and related preparation early enough to assure the possibility of a generalized Eastern European competence by the end of graduate study. Competence in German is a requirement very much to be welcomed in this program; overemphasis on German linkages could, of course, be as dubious as overemphasis on the ties with Russia.

Without denigrating the early efforts of major centers of Slavic and East European centers to do justice to the non-Russian area, it is still fair to say that we are just taking our first faltering steps in this field. It is certainly premature to draw any sweeping conclusions from or about these new programs, except to note that they have emerged in congruence with a growth in Title VI fellowships for languages other than Russian and with an increasing attention to Eastern Europe under the Title VI research program. But it is not too early to identify certain measures that would help us to move in the desired direction.

We need of course to know much more exactly what our resources are for further development of Eastern European studies, what experience is available for guidance of the government and foundations as well as of the colleges and universities. This is a matter that is evidently well in hand, thanks to a projected ACLS study of the question. We also need much better and more abundant teaching and references material, not just in languages but also in the social sciences and humanities. This need can probably only be filled gradually as our programs develop, as more trained personnel enlarge the possibilities for production of needed materials and as the very process of growth refines our perception of what is most needed. We need the assurance of government and foundation, as well as institutional, commitment on a continuing basis, for only such assurance will serve to attract the number and quality of apprentices needed to form the next generation of scholars. We need to develop, more thoughtfully and systematically, the possibilities of direct professorial and student contact with both their Eastern and their Western European counterparts. (Access to Eastern Europe is one of the few advantages the field enjoys vis-à-vis Russian studies; but we are painfully ill-informed about work going on in Western European countries.) And finally, there is a pressing need for a blurring of the sharp line of demarcation between Eastern and Central or Western Europe. On the institutional level this might mean closer collaboration between scholars to reduce our neglect of East Germany, for example. On the governmental level, this could mean alteration of present rules to permit support of German language instruction under NDEA, a change that could be as fruitful for Eastern European studies as the support of French could be for African studies. That the problem of interaction between foreign area programs and the 'old-line' language departments has not really been solved in the universities is only an additional reason to dangle a new carrot to encourage collaboration on the campus.

What we need above all is a clear appreciation, on a national scale and involving sources of support as well as educational institutions, that our

society has a stake in developing new capacities for training and for scholarship in a neglected field. The merest glance at our library resources should suffice to foster such a realization. This is not a matter of 'seed money,' at least as that term is commonly understood, to launch a new academic development. It is a matter of long-term commitment to establish and maintain centers of academic strength, even—or especially—when they may be underutilized. We may call our programs by different names—language and area, or international, or even comparative studies—and we may, indeed must, remain flexible as to the precise points at which support will be most fruitful at a given stage. It may, in the light of subsequent legislative developments, have been only a symbolic gesture when the Kennedy administration proposed to remove the time limit from an amended version of NDEA. But it was symptomatic at least of a clear and farsighted view of the kind of world environment in which our society must expect to live.

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